



DrumBeat: January 1, 2008

Posted by [Leanan](#) on January 1, 2008 - 6:04pm

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Why the era of cheap food is over](#)

Two major trends have been pushing prices up faster than they have risen for more than 30 years. One is that increasingly prosperous consumers in India and China are not only eating more food but eating more meat. Animals have to be fed (grains, usually) before they are butchered. The other is that more and more crops – from corn to palm nuts – are being used to make biofuels instead of feeding people.

At the same time, the world is drawing down its stockpiles of cereal and dairy products, which makes markets nervous and prices volatile.

The result, says Joachim von Braun, who heads the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington, is that "the world food system is in trouble. The situation has not been this much of a concern for 15 years."

[Cost of crude oil ends year 57 percent higher](#)

Oil prices ended the year near \$96 a barrel, or 57 percent higher than where they began, and analysts expect rising demand and geopolitical instability to keep upward pressure on energy costs early in 2008.

"There's a good chance this week that we'll see some record highs," Jim Ritterbusch, president of Ritterbusch and Associates in Galena, Ill., said.

[UK: Decrease in traffic due to fuel prices, says expert](#)

AN UNEXPECTED fall in road traffic across Northern Ireland may have been because of high fuel prices, a road expert has said.

Figures released in the Assembly show that traffic volumes on all classes of road fell in 2006 – following years where the trend had been inexorably upwards.

[UK: Bus fares go up](#)

Bus passengers are facing a fares increase to rival the price rises on train services.

First, the biggest operator of bus services in the Bradford district, is putting up some fares by as much as 14 per cent from Sunday.

The company says the increases are because of rising fuel costs.

[NTUC chief urges Singaporeans to be prepared to live with higher fuel, food prices](#)

"There's no running away from higher energy costs, higher food prices because this is a global phenomenon. But what we can do in Singapore is to make sure our workers are able cope with this better than any other workers in any other countries."

[Turning the tide against oil pipeline vandals](#)

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) late last week raised an alarm that very powerful Nigerians are behind the persistent fuel pipeline fires in the country.

[Arab bourses score impressive gains in 2007](#)

Arab stock markets recorded major gains in 2007, above all thanks to soaring oil prices that secured huge surplus petrodollars for oil-rich Arab countries, analysts said Tuesday.

[Israeli nanotech provides green electricity](#)

Orionsolar's nanotechnology based solar power cells could have a big impact - on energy conservation, global warming, and your home electric bill. In fact, the company's innovative developments in the area of solar technology will change not only the way you and I get our electrical power, according to Breen; but also bring the magic of electricity to people who, until now, have never had the opportunity to turn the lights on in their own homes.

['Grease cars' — the answer to high gas prices?](#)

Move over gas-guzzlers. Make way for grease cars, the latest do-it-yourself auto trend for eco-conscious drivers.

[British wildlife in steep decline as man-made activities take their toll](#)

Several of Britain's best-known animal species, ranging from the hedgehog to the harbour seal, are now suffering declines that require serious conservation action, according to a comprehensive report on the status of British mammals.

[Bad microbes on the move](#)

SINCE the 1950s, when scientists first identified the mosquito-borne tropical disease known as chikungunya, its reach has been limited to countries near the Indian Ocean. But in August, chikungunya broke out in Italy. Now World Health Organization officials are calling it the first example of a tropical disease, aided by global warming, causing an epidemic in a developed European country. The outbreak should spur efforts both to curb greenhouse gases and to prepare public health defenses against infections spread by climate change.

[In 2008, a 100 Percent Chance of Alarm](#)

I'd like to wish you a happy New Year, but I'm afraid I have a different sort of prediction.

You're in for very bad weather. In 2008, your television will bring you image after frightening image of natural havoc linked to global warming. You will be told that such bizarre weather must be a sign of dangerous climate change — and that these images are a mere preview of what's in store unless we act quickly to cool the planet.

[Iran reduces gas exports to Turkey after Turkmen cut](#)

Iran has reduced natural gas exports to Turkey after Turkmenistan halted supplies to Iran, an Iranian energy official said on Tuesday, adding he expected Turkmen deliveries to be restored by the end of the week. An Iranian news agency, Fars, said Iran had slashed its daily sales to Turkey by around 75 percent to 4-5 million cubic metres due to Turkmenistan's move and the cold winter weather.

[Natural gas drilling expected to keep falling in '08, oilsands activity to grow](#)

Natural gas producers and drillers, whose field activity plummeted this year probably won't be seeing much relief in 2008, while action in the oilsands is expected to intensify thanks to record-high crude oil prices.

[Kenya: Fuel and food shortages loom as shops remain closed](#)

Kenyans could be in for tough times if the standoff over the presidential election results is not resolved soon as food and fuel shortages begin to bite.

Yesterday, motorists and airlines were already feeling the effects of fuel shortages as oil companies suspended distribution of the commodity due to insecurity and violence.

[Pakistan: Fuel shortage may worsen power situation](#)

The electricity shortage that currently fluctuates between 1,000 and 3,000 megawatts is likely to worsen in a few days because of problems of transporting furnace oil and diesel through the railway system and other means.

Petroleum Ministry sources told Dawn that Pakistan State Oil (PSO) has sought federal government's permission to invoke force majeure clauses of its fuel supply agreements (FSAs) with independent power producers (IPPs) because of its inability to meet fuel requirements because damage caused to railway tracks and fuel-carrying bogies was much more than originally believed.

[Myanmar Quashes Fuel Ration Cut Rumors](#)

Myanmar's ruling military, apparently wary of igniting another outbreak of mass demonstrations, tried to quash rumors Tuesday that fuel rations would be slashed in the face of rising global oil prices.

A sudden hike in fuel prices last year led to protests that ballooned into anti-government street protests that were brutally crushed by the military.

[Indian oil firms to map bigger global footprint](#)

Analysts are asking the all-important question: how long can India avoid a pass-through of global crude prices into the domestic market?

[Venezuela launches new currency](#)

Venezuela launched a new currency with the new year, lopping off three zeros from denominations in a bid to simplify finances and boost confidence in a money that has been losing value due to high inflation.

President Hugo Chavez's government says the new currency - dubbed the "strong bolivar" - will make daily transactions easier and cure some accounting headaches. Officials also say it is part of a broader effort to contain rising prices and strengthen the economy.

[Oil Rig Evacuated After Radiation Scare in Vietnam](#)

More than 400 workers on an oil rig off Vietnam were evacuated after a small amount of radioactive material went missing, authorities said Sunday.

Workers later found the piece of iridium-192, which was used to power equipment used to check for flaws in welding on the oil rig off of the southern port city of Vung Tau, 100 kilometers east of Ho Chi Minh City.

[Cities and energy consumption](#)

However, while the cities may be internally efficient, the problem doesn't just lie in the stuff that gets consumed within city limits. More often than not the bigger environmental issue lies in how that stuff gets to the city in the first place.

[‘Action, action, action’ needed to fight climate change](#)

Robert H. Socolow and Stephen W. Pacala of Princeton University pioneered this thinking with the concept of a stabilizing wedge — a specific, individual technological or social action that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one billion tons annually over 50 years.

In the remainder of this article we will present 17 different possible actions, each capable of delivering one-eighth of the total solution needed. None of these actions are simple or easy — many we don't even know how to do today — but all are considered possible with the technological innovation we can expect in the next 50 years.

[Increasing global demand for energy: Challenges and opportunities](#)

The energy crisis has started and the world is about to go through a profound and wrenching change.

We face an energy crisis never before confronted in human history. Energy for transportation, manufacturing and everyday living will have to come from other sources than the one we use now, most likely less efficient sources. That beautiful black liquid with the fantastic power / mass ratio that was the base building block of our civilization is going to hit its mid point, global peak oil, and then slide into permanent decline and we will be forced to make major changes in our way of living. Population goes up, the oil supply goes down. Year after year, decade after decade, demand and population increase, supplies of oil decrease. Until all the oil is gone.

[Oil's wild ride](#)

Oil prices look set to end 2007 with the biggest gain this decade, climbing nearly 60 percent since the start of the year. But the ascent has been anything but steady.

[U.S. consumers' wallets hit by weak greenback](#)

Americans grouching about soaring gasoline prices often focus on the big oil companies and anyone else who might profit when costs jump at the pump. But one factor that doesn't always get fingered when prices rise — a weak U.S. dollar — could draw more attention in the coming year.

[Suspected militants hit Nigerian oil city, 12 dead](#)

Suspected militants attacked two police stations, a luxury hotel and a night club in Nigeria's oil city Port Harcourt on Tuesday killing 12 people, police said. The New Year's Day assault came after troops bombed suspected rebel hideouts near the city last weekend and after the collapse of peace talks between militants and the government of Africa's top oil producer.

[Nigeria: Shell West Nigeria Output Drops By Extra 80,000 B/D](#)

THE west base operations of the Anglo Dutch Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) which covers Delta State has suffered a drop of about 80,000 barrels per day in its maximum output, just as the company announces cost cutting measures to enable it remain afloat as the Niger Delta crisis takes toll on its operations.

An official of the organisation who spoke under condition of anonymity hinted that the company is experiencing a lull in its activities in Delta and Rivers states, where several of its installations had been vandalised and out of use.

From its one million barrel per day production capacity, Shell is said to be producing only half of the total output.

[Shell completes repairs at Scotford upgrader](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc completed repairs to its fire-damaged Scotford oil sands upgrader and is now producing in excess of half its 155,000 barrel per day capacity of synthetic oil, with full output expected next month.

[Oil in North Dakota Brings Job Boom and Burdens](#)

The early morning line hints at the sudden fortune that has arrived: Oil companies, saying that they located what may prove to be one of the largest recent oil finds in the United States, have begun drilling all through these parts. Fifty-two drilling rigs were at work in the state at the end of December; a count taken in October showed that 198 new wells had been drilled in a year, state officials said.

[Shipbuilders Expect Another Boom Year](#)

Despite the rapid growth of Chinese shipbuilders, South Korean shipbuilders are expected to post another record year in 2008 thanks to increasing demand for valued-added ships and high oil prices.

..."Basically, there is no concern in the industry for 2008 as top local players have already secured enough orders to keep them busy for the next four years," said Ohk Hyo-won, an analyst at Hyundai Securities.

[Pa. pipeline company looks to keep its tanks full](#)

Nearly 60 million gallons of fuel move through Buckeye Partners L.P.'s pipelines every day, but the Breinigsville, Pa., company doesn't own a drop.

Instead of buying and selling fuel, Buckeye, like other pipeline companies, is paid to transport, store and load other companies' inventory onto trucks for delivery.

But its planned purchase of Farm & Home Oil Co., a fuel distributor and marketer in Telford, for \$145.5 million will dramatically change the way Buckeye does business by making it the owner of some of the fuel that courses its 5,400 miles of pipelines.

[Arab Times](#)

Kuwait's oil exports to the Far Eastern countries increased by 10.9 percent in 2007, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Monday. Spot transactions sales to the Far East in 2007 rose from 79 percent to 81 percent while they dropped by 2 percent to the West, from 21 percent to 19 percent, Data obtained by KUNA on the KPC's achievements this year showed. The Corporation realized KD 1.708 billion in profits during the past fiscal year and managed to double crude oil sales to the Chinese market to 80,000 barrels a day. As for training, participants in the various training and development programs in the various units of the oils sector in 2007 hit 30,000, among them 24,000 participants in the Petroleum Training Centre (PTC) in Al-Ahmadi, an unprecedented rate in the oil sector.

[Hidden Holocaust - Our Civilizational Crisis: the End of the World as We Know It?](#)

According to an official report published by British Petroleum late last year, we have about 30 years before we peak. This is supposed to be an 'optimistic' assessment. Apart from the fact that this is hardly good news, it is a clearly politicized claim from an oil industry fighting to sustain its credibility as the Oil Age nears its demise. Colin Campbell, himself a former senior BP geologist, argues that the data shows we have less than 4 years; and in the meantime, former US government energy adviser Matt Simmons argues that we have most likely peaked years ago, but won't know for sure until we start feeling the crunch within a few years.

[New Energy Uses for Asphalt](#)

If you've ever blistered your bare feet on a hot road you know that asphalt absorbs the sun's energy. A Dutch company is now siphoning heat from roads and parking lots to heat homes and offices.

As climate change rises on the international agenda, the system built by the civil engineering firm, Ooms Avenhorn Holding BV, doesn't look as wacky as it might have 10 years ago when first conceived.

[This year resolve to update cosmetics to eco-friendly brands](#)

According to Hankins, over 90 percent of all beauty and cosmetic ingredients are derived from petrochemicals and other synthetics.

"The manufacturing and processing of these compounds is not only bad for people, but it creates an unsustainable business considering we have hit peak oil production," he said.

[Japan to lead climate debate as head of G8 rich club](#)

Japan took over the presidency of the Group of Eight club of the world's leading economies Tuesday, with Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda vowing to put a focus on climate change and environmental issues.

[Business rules](#)

The year 2007 will go down in history as the year when a phase shift occurred in global public awareness of the climate change crisis. It will also go down as the year when the people of the world and their future generations were shortchanged by a clique of business interests that manipulate the policies of a few powerful rich countries.

[Parting company with McKibben and, maybe, Hansen](#)

Since beating 450 ppm is doable and certainly necessary, that's where I draw the line. One advantage of pursuing 450 is that if we do get some sort of unexpected breakthrough -- a cheap and practical way to draw CO₂ out of the air (that doesn't use a lot of land, water, or energy) and stick it someplace permanent -- then we would have a system in place to deploy it fast enough to perhaps get to below 400 ppm. And even if turns out 450 doesn't avert catastrophe, it will surely slow down the impacts enough to make adaptation more viable.



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